



Medicine series

Practice details

Amantadine

- Keep this leaflet safe, as you may need to refer to it again.
- Please ask your vet or veterinary nurse if you have any further questions.
- This medicine has been prescribed for your pet ONLY. Do not take it yourself or give it to another person or any other animal; it may harm them even if their symptoms appear to be the same.

The medicine you have been given for your dog or cat is called amantadine. It may have a trade name such as Symmetrel®, but often will just be called amantadine.

What is amantadine?

Amantadine inhibits nerve signals in the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) which have become overactive. This can occur in animals with chronic pain states and leads to a heightened sense of pain. Therefore dampening down these overactive pain signals can lead to pain relief. This drug is used in human patients to treat several conditions, including Parkinson's disease, although it is not used for this purpose in dogs, cats and other pets.

Why has my pet been prescribed amantadine?

In dogs and cats, amantadine is used to treat chronic pain, such as occurs with osteoarthritis (degenerative joint disease) or nerve pain, and it is usually prescribed in conjunction with another painkiller. Giving different pain-relieving drugs in combination usually provides better pain relief than using single drugs on their own.

How should I store amantadine?

The capsules, tablets or syrup should be stored in a cool, dry place such as a cupboard. For safety, **all medicines should be kept out of the reach and sight of children**. Return any unused medication to your vet or a pharmacist for disposal, do not discard via waste water or in household waste.

How do I give amantadine capsules, tablets or syrup to my pet?

Amantadine capsules, tablets or syrup must be given by mouth, with or without food. Capsules/tablets may be wrapped in a small amount of food to disguise the taste. The drug has a bitter taste so your pet may reject the medicine if the capsule or tablet is bitten.

How long will my pet need to take amantadine?

It may take up to 21 days to see beneficial effects so initially your vet will want to treat for a minimum of 3 weeks. At this point treatment may be stopped or continued long-term if it is not possible to cure the source of pain and continued treatment with pain relief is necessary.

What should I do if I run out of amantadine?

Missing a few days will not cause your pet a problem, although you should request a new prescription as soon as possible as the beneficial effects will start to wear off.

What should I do if I miss a dose?

Do not worry. Give the dose as soon as you remember, but avoid giving two doses less than 8 hours apart. **DO NOT** give a double dose to make up for the missed dose and do not exceed the total stated dose in any one 24-hour period.

What should I do if my pet is accidentally given too many doses?

Contact your vet for advice. The most likely side effect will be vomiting but even if your pet is sick, the drug will still be in their body. If a very large dose is given, it is possible your pet may become agitated or have seizures, so it is important to seek advice as quickly as possible.

Can my pet take amantadine if I am already giving them other drugs?

It is important to tell your vet about all medications and supplements your pet is being given. Amantadine may be safely combined with a number of other medications as judged suitable by your vet.

What are the possible side effects of amantadine for my pet?

Common side effects:

- Vomiting (being sick) shortly after being given the medicine – this is usually resolved by giving it with food or reducing the dose. Seek advice from your vet
- Flatulence and diarrhoea which may be watery – this is usually only a problem in the first few days of treatment. If your pet is severely affected, seek advice from your vet
- Slight drowsiness – this medicine may make your pet a little sleepy.

Uncommon side effects:

- Agitation – if your pet becomes restless or hyper-excitable after giving this medicine, seek advice from your vet before giving the next dose.

Rare side effects:

- Seizures – if your pet has had seizures in the past, you must tell your vet before giving this medicine
- Peripheral oedema (swelling of the limbs due to fluid accumulation) – if your pet has a condition of the heart or kidneys, you must tell your vet before giving this medicine.

The Prescribing Cascade

This medicine is authorized for use in human patients and is used by vets under the 'prescribing cascade'. The medicine is not authorized by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD), an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), for use in dogs/cats/pets. Your vet can explain the 'prescribing cascade' in further detail to you and also explain why they are prescribing this drug for your pet. You will be asked to sign a consent form stating that you understand the reasons that the drug is being prescribed and its possible complications, before the treatment is issued.

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What should I do if my pet is unwell while taking amantadine?

Seek advice from your vet, who will be able to advise you about whether to continue giving the medicine or not.

What should I do if a person accidentally takes this drug?

Tell your doctor at once or contact the nearest accident and emergency department. Take this leaflet and any remaining capsules/tablets plus their container (even if it is empty) with you.

Whom do I contact if I want to know more?

If you have any questions about this drug or concerns about your pet's health, contact your own vet. They will know your pet's medical history and will know about amantadine.